

An Overview of the Swan Valley School Division and Vision for Education in Manitoba

Respectfully Submitted to the
K-12 Education Review Commission
By the Swan Valley School Division
Board of Trustees

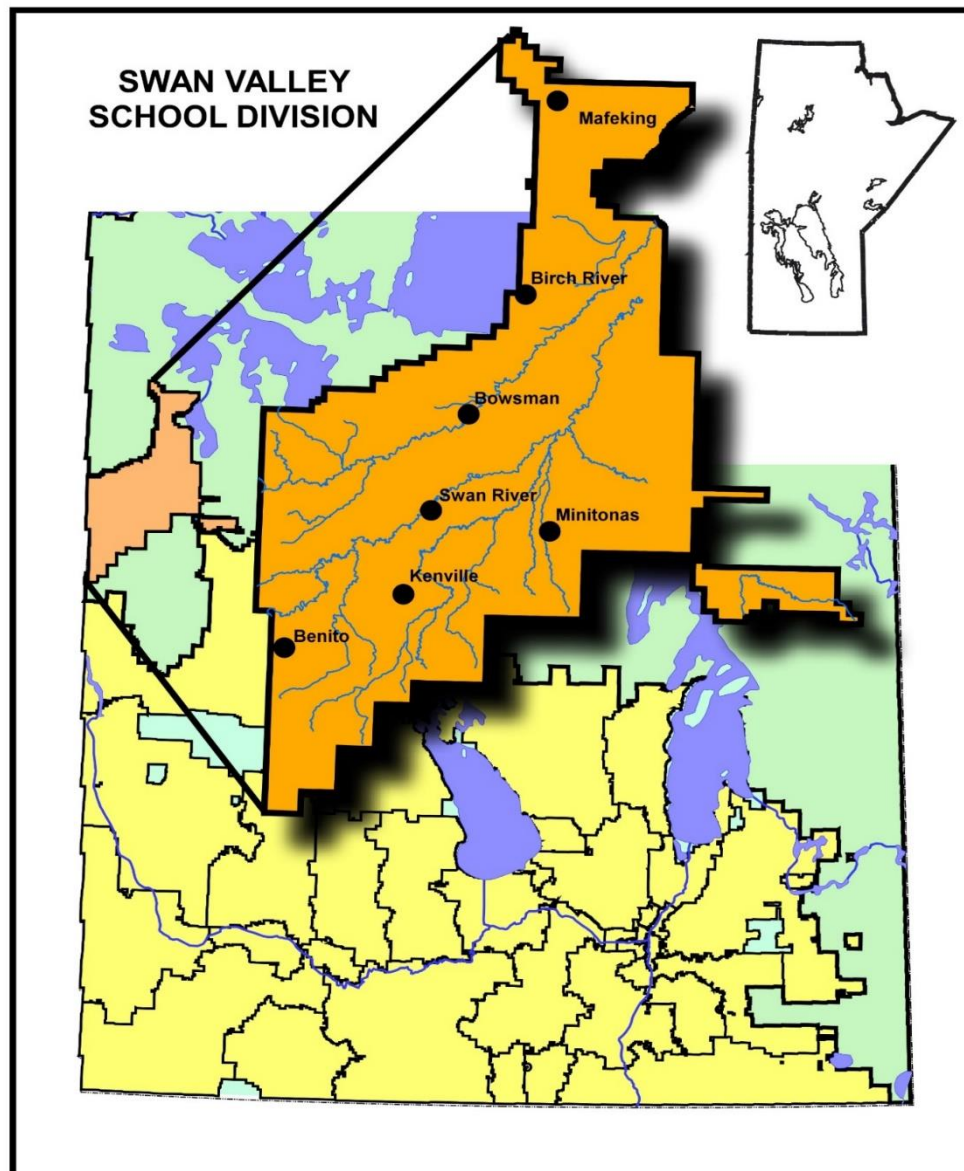
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Our Location



The Swan Valley School Division is located in the South Western part of Manitoba.

We are the following distances from other centers:

-The Pas (229km North)

-Dauphin (171km Southeast)

-Russell (176km South)

-Winnipeg (500km)

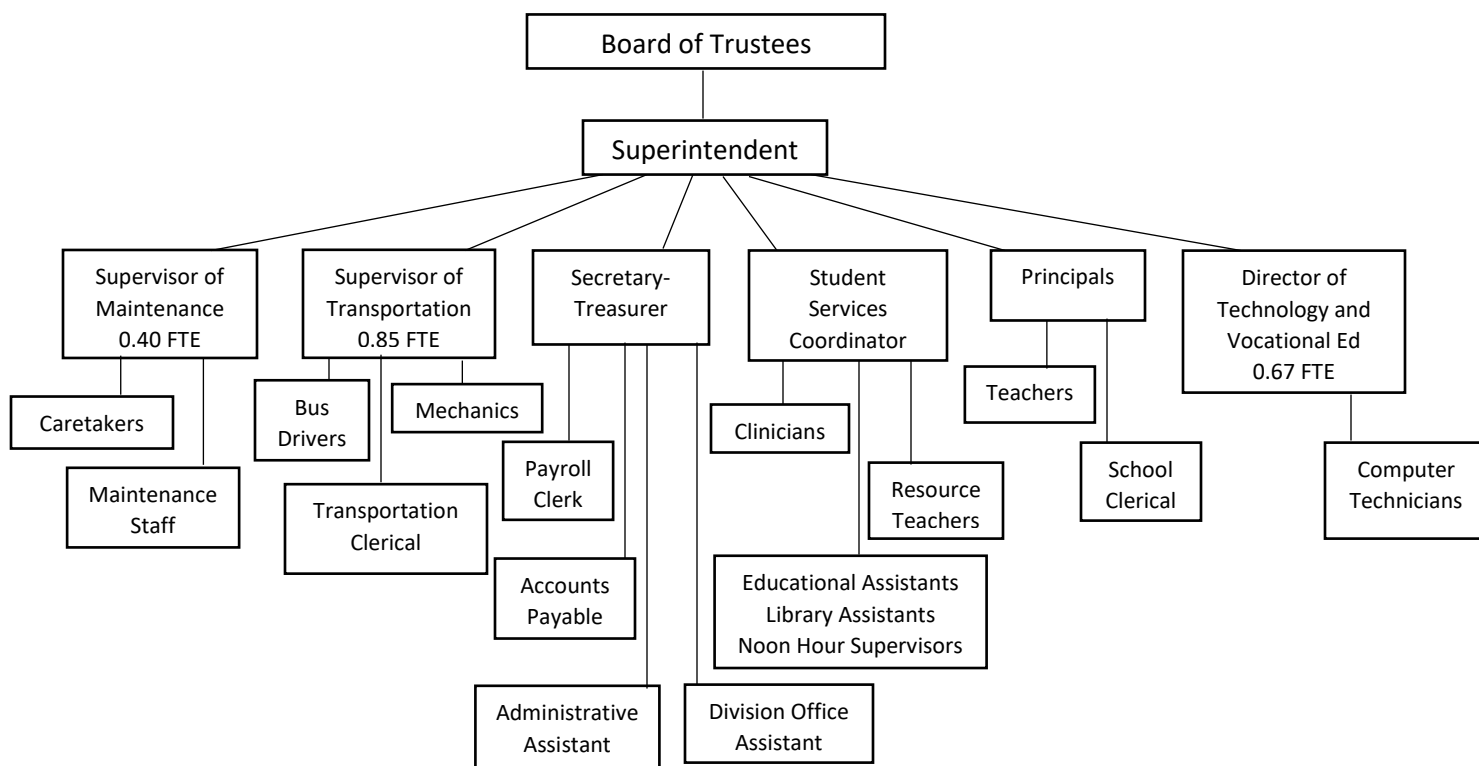
The Swan Valley School Division Board of Trustees wishes to express our appreciation to the Commission for the opportunity to share our thoughts on the future of education not only in the Swan Valley region, but the province of Manitoba. It is our sincere hope that this review of the K-12 system in Manitoba results in a modern and efficient system while maintaining local authority and preparing students with the skills required to succeed in a rapidly changing world. This document will show that not only has the Swan Valley School Division been a leader in the past, but continues to be visionary in providing exceptional education in rural Manitoba.

Our Vision: Ready to Succeed

Our Mission: To create an inspiring, learning community where we all belong, contribute and succeed.

The Swan Valley School Division Office is located in Swan River. Our enrollment is currently 1411 students. The Division serves the communities of Benito, Birch River, Bowsman, Cowan, Durban, Kenville, Mafeking, Minitonas and Swan River. We also provide high school programming to Wuskwi Sipiik First Nation, as well as Sopotewayak First Nation.

As the following organizational chart shows, the Swan Valley School Division is managed very efficiently. The Board of Trustees has reduced its size from nine to seven. There is one Superintendent, one Secretary-Treasurer, one part-time Supervisor of Transportation, one part-time Supervisor of Maintenance, one Student Services Coordinator, and one part-time Director of Technology and Vocational Education. For the 2019-20 school year, 3.45% of our budget will be spent on administration.



The Board of Trustees has made every attempt at becoming as efficient as possible while maintaining the highest quality of programming to our students. In the 2014 municipal elections, twenty-one candidates ran for the nine positions, resulting in six new members. A new strategic plan was developed in 2017 with the top priorities being: Maximizing Resources; Cultural Inclusiveness; Programming for Success; Health and Well-Being; and Sustainability of Human Resources. Regarding the area of maximizing resources, the Board undertook a comprehensive round of community consultations in early 2018. A restructuring plan was devised for the division which included the closure of the Minitonas Early Years school, a review of the Birch River School which has resulted in a request to the Minister of Education to close the school as of the fall of 2019, and the potential to rearrange younger grades within the schools in Swan River to decrease staffing levels. We have reduced three bus routes, eliminated three teaching positions, reduced secretarial hours by five per day across the division, eliminated the Junior Kindergarten Program, reduced every department's discretionary spending, eliminating a trades position in the maintenance department and eliminated a three day per week Division Office Secretarial position. In 2017, the Board of Trustees had also asked, and received permission from the Minister of Education to allow the Swan Valley School Division to reduce the size of the Board from nine to seven in the 2018 election.

67% of our \$21 355 552 budget is provincially funded, with 30% coming from local municipal dollars and 3% from other sources. This budget is stretched to provide Speech-Language Pathology with one in-house clinician, as well as contracted services through the Tiny-Eye service which is proving to be invaluable in filling the great needs for speech-language services in our division. We also have an in-house School Psychologist, however the need is so great that we require two, and for many years had two budgeted for. Unfortunately, trained professionals in this area are very difficult to access and we rarely had a full complement and so the second position was cut for the 2016/17 school year.

Our Division presently has 28 bus routes which will travel a combined total of 785887 kilometers in the coming school year. Our division covers 3636.4 km² with over 90% of students receiving transportation services. 8.93 % of our budget is spent on transportation.

The Board of Trustees was also able to successfully lobby the Department of Education to increase the allotted sum of money for the construction of the SVSD Trades Building to not only have the capacity to teach Carpentry, but Plumbing and Industrial Electrical as well.

The Swan Valley School Division prides themselves in the partnerships that have been formed to create educational opportunities for not only high school students, but adult students as well, and to create a greater support system for students and their families. The University College of the North (UCN) has built a Workplace Development Centre in Swan River which is situated right beside the Swan Valley Regional Secondary School (SVRSS). UCN uses the various vocational shop spaces SVSD has to provide a variety of programming to adult students. Most recently, in the fall of 2018, UCN offered a Level One Carpentry Program, using the School Division's facility. The classes were held at the same time as the high school classes and as a result, two programs were successfully running side by side in the same facility. The SVRSS is able to offer dual credit programming in many vocational areas because of our strong partnership with UCN, including: Culinary Arts, Welding, Automotive Technology, Hairstyling, Heavy Duty Equipment Technician, Carpentry and Electrical Trades Technology.

Our community is very supportive of the dual credit system, and our student body has embraced it as well. In 2018, 20% of grade twelve students graduated with dual credits earned, giving students a head start on post-secondary studies. It is also possible for students to earn their complete Level One Technical Training, allowing them to graduate high school ready to enter full-time Level One Apprenticeship. Not only does this save students and families large sums of money by not having to pay tuition expenses, but the largest expense of living expenses because the students can receive the training right here, and stay at home. For some students in rural Manitoba, the prospect of moving to a city for any post-secondary training is not possible for reasons including finances, lack of social support systems, or a general unpreparedness to leave home. This causes some to not pursue any type of post-secondary. Having post-secondary training available locally makes the idea of continuing studies approachable and eases the anxiety that many experience. As the need for Level 2/3/4 training arises they will be able to respond and provide the needed training using our facilities. In addition to technical vocational opportunities, in 2018 a partnership with the University of Brandon allowed for nine students to complete a University level English course.

In addition to partnerships which benefitted our high school students, the Division also has many partnerships to help provide services to our youngest of learners and their families as we recognize the need to intervene early and intervene often. For several years we offered a Pre-Kindergarten Program. Unfortunately, due to budget difficulties we were unable to maintain the program. Now that we are no longer offering Junior Kindergarten, we have continued to expand partnerships with our local Day Cares, HeadStart, and Nursery Schools to enhance pre-school student learning and engagement. Through the North-Parkland Parent Child Coalition Better Beginnings and SVSD, we have offered BookMates programs like Sharing Stories to Early Years partners and the Roots of Empathy program training.

We have recently begun to assess three-year old children with the Early Years Evaluation (EYE). Parents will receive a report based on five areas of development: Awareness of Self and Environment, Cognitive, Language and Communication and Physical Development (fine and gross motor skills). Children will have two years to further develop these skills before beginning school. Children may be connected to Children's Therapy Initiative services to assist with child development or referred to the Child Development Clinic. Parents are encouraged to attend Better Beginnings sessions and the Triple P or Guiding Good Choices parenting programs offered by Swan Valley Communities That Care. In 2018, EYE results indicated that 54% of children entering Kindergarten demonstrated appropriate development in the area of Awareness of Self and Environment, 43% appropriate cognitive skills, 48% appropriate language development and 66% had appropriate physical development. We also complete a post-assessment in the Spring and determine if we have made a significant difference for those children demonstrating difficulty in these developmental skills. Our hope is that these differences can be made in pre-school programs before children enter school. If not, we begin with where they are at and accommodate learning.

Children experience play-based learning in Kindergarten. Every other year, the Early Years Developmental Instrument (EDI) is administered to Kindergarten students which provides local data in comparison to the rest of the Province. The most recent data collected in 2016-17 indicates our SVSD students are comparable to the Provincial results. SVSD also administers the Visual Motor Integration Assessment (VMI) in the Fall of a child's Kindergarten year and the Bracken Skills of Readiness assessment in the Spring of Kindergarten. This data assists in identifying children with special learning needs and allows for early, appropriate interventions. If students are struggling by the end of grade 1,

cognitive or behavioural psychological assessments may be considered. This allows children to work at individualized, appropriate programming, if necessary. Students may require Individualized Education Plans, Behaviour Intervention Plans, accommodations, or advanced programming options.

All grade 1 students are assessed in the area of literacy. Observation survey results are sent in to MET each year. Struggling readers receive Early Literacy Intervention or Reading Recovery. All students have the opportunity to read and communicate at appropriate levels through Leveled Literacy, Guided Reading, Renaissance Accelerated Reading, Raz Kids, and Daily 5. In Mathematics, students may be assessed with Key Math and work on benchmarks with various supports.

As mentioned earlier, our Division has one full-time Speech and Language Pathologist, and we were early adopters of TinyEye, the on-line SLP service to deliver individualized therapy. This is a huge benefit to our rural Division where the caseload is approximately 200 students. We simply cannot access enough services through Manitoba Health or recruit qualified personnel. In the 2017/18 fiscal year we spent \$80,125 and in 2016/17 \$84,000 on the Tiny-Eye Service. This allows for early intervention for the 52% of students entering Kindergarten demonstrating some or significant language difficulties. We have one full-time Psychologist and have 2.5 counsellors. Our Division was chosen to take part in the APPLE Schools program, an innovative school-focused health promotion initiative. The program teaches healthy eating, physical activity, and mental health habits.

SVSD participates in all Provincial assessments in grades 3/4, 7/8 and high school. Results are shared at administration meetings with all levels, as we feel it is a shared responsibility to review and interpret results.

Student learning is a direct reflection on the professional development of teachers. For example, we have recently trained our teachers and educational assistants with the assistance of the Treaty Relations Commission of MB and implemented the K-12 Treaty Education Continuum Resource Kits in all schools. Our Indigenous Academic Achievement Coordinator leads a professional learning community committee to assist teachers in their professional development in this area to deliver content to students in a meaningful way, respecting cultural diversity. The Building Students Success program with Indigenous Parents assists in connecting with Indigenous families.

Besides academic achievement, our Division takes great pride in the extra curricular achievements of our students in arts and sports. The support of our local Valley community is immeasurable in this area. Our students have many opportunities to participate in activities and have excelled locally, Provincially and Internationally. The Envirothon program in particular has had success on an international stage, and sparked the careers of numerous students in the field of Environmental Sciences. We also maintain community partnerships with Swan Valley Communities that Care, Community Mobilization, Chamber of Commerce, and our partner Municipalities. Our partnership with Prairie Mountain Health is proving invaluable as the Teen Clinic that is housed in the SVRSS is providing mental health, public health and nurse practitioner services.

Families are community members. We believe a strong focus on children and their families in our communities is essential for student success which in turn will only strengthen our community.

The Division operates the following schools:

The description of each school is important to this submission as it is easy to get lost in the vast opportunities the Swan Valley Regional Secondary School provides. Every school in this Division is doing great work, we are immensely proud of them and they deserve recognition as well.

Benito School



School Motto: Stimulate, Educate, Empower

Benito School is a Kindergarten to Grade 8 school. Benito School fully embraces multi-grade classrooms and believes that the benefits of multi-grade classrooms far outweigh the disadvantages. They pride themselves in the fact that their teachers and students have the privilege of working together for a minimum of two years, which they deem as a definite asset with which to promote quality learning. What makes this school truly special is that whether it is on the stage, or on the court, our students consistently pull together and bring out the absolute best in each other. They pride themselves in their ability to build competitive sports teams, and accomplish many amazing feats, even with a declining enrolment. Perhaps their greatest claim to fame is their marathon training program; for more than fifteen years Benito School has trained students, parents, and staff who have carried on to participate in the Manitoba Marathon as well as a variety of other marathon runs. Their second claim to fame is the dinner theatre production that stuns the community with their singing, dancing, drama abilities and great food. It is held every second year.

Birch River School



Due to declining enrolment and budgetary restrictions, the Board of Trustees has regretfully announced that permission to proceed with the closure of Birch River School has been requested from the Provincial Government for the 2019-20 school year. Students from the Birch River School are encouraged to attend the Bowsman School, but the Division will do its best to accommodate School of Choice requests.

Bowsman School



School Motto: Be respectful, Be responsible, Be safe

The Bowsman School (K-8), that has identified four areas of priority which are: Literacy and numeracy; strengthening community relationships to support learning; promoting the development and wellness towards healthy school environments; improving student engagement. Community projects are of great importance as they work to fulfil these priorities. The school's newest project is their Community Garden. They have built greenhouses, a butterfly garden and tranquility garden. Throughout the summer, the staff take turns tending to the garden, and we have invited community members to help out and harvest the produce as it becomes ready. They are teaching their students to grow their own food, as well as the importance of a healthy lifestyle. Their students have a growing sense of pride and commitment working together as a school community. Because of our rural environment, students have the chance to experience many outdoor educational activities including ice fishing, open water fishing, shelter building, swimming and overnight camping trips.

Minitonas School



School Motto: To educate, inspire and respect each other.

In the 2018-19 school year, the community of Minitonas saw the closure of the Minitonas Early Years School (K-5) as the Board of Trustees made the decision to consolidate the two schools in Minitonas, adding the early years students to the Middle Years School (6-8) thus creating, the Minitonas School (K-8). This was the first major change that was made as part of the Board's restructuring plan to deal with declining enrolment and budgetary constraints.

The Minitonas School aims to create a school climate where there are high expectations for students and staff improving outcomes for learners; create a safe space where staff and students alike come to be inspired, create friendships, to learn and to have fun; and to promote physical activity and good nutrition practices, wellness and healthy school environments. They strive everyday to make sure that their students are safe and happy. They rely on these four basic principles: play; make their day; be there; and choose your attitude. These principles are an integral part of their school culture. It is a set of uncomplicated, interconnected principles that they all work hard to tailor their lives and work. Students are encouraged to step outside their comfort zone to expand their learning potential!

Heyes Elementary School



School Motto: Respect for LEO (Learning, our Environment, Oneself and others)

Heyes School (K-6) is located in Swan River and serves many rural families as well as families in the town of Swan River. Their four priorities include: improving outcomes for all learners by striving to reach all learning styles, interests, and aptitude so they can provide a broad and rich learning experience for everyone; Enhance community relations and parental involvement by providing an inclusive and supportive environment; Promote lifelong learning by encouraging physical and mental wellness including positive social interactions and problem solving skills; and create a working and learning environment where people are safe, happy, relaxed, and inspired. They pride themselves on stressing the importance of belonging and ownership to students that are new to the school. One example is the “Newest Member of Heyes School” t-shirt that kindergarten students receive to feel welcomed to school. These t-shirts are supplied by the School’s PAC. The school’s wish for all students, is that all students can see themselves as authors, artists, mathematicians, athletes and artists. Students that feel limitless will have more success in all areas.

Taylor School



School Motto: Children First

Taylor School (K-5) is located in the town of Swan River and services students from the town. The Taylor School Staff has set only one priority, which is to enable our children to grow and succeed in every way. They pride themselves on having a very devoted staff who are always willing to pitch in and get things done, and a very proactive Parent Advisory Council who funds items like a new playground, milk program, and PAC lunches. Every two years they perform a musical, have a very active and talented choir, run a community-wide Fun Fest and have a dedicated Grade 5 Safety Patrol to keep everybody safe! Taylor School is situated in an ideal location, being so close to the Indoor Pool, Curling and Hockey Rinks, the Town Library and Bowling Alley! The School backs onto Legion Park which has several ball fields, band shell and paved walking trails with a view of the Swan River. Taylor School is a community hub which provides well rounded, active and interesting programs for students.

École Swan River South School



School Motto: Cooperate, Motivate, Educate

École Swan River South School (K-8) is located in Swan River and is a dual track school which houses a French Immersion Program. The school believes in honoring, celebrating and supporting the cultural diversity in their school. Their priorities are: to address the needs of all learners; to develop excellence in learning and citizenship within a safe and supportive environment in a diverse school community; and to become a Restitution Disciplined School. ÉSRSS is the second largest school in the division and is able to offer a variety of programming that is specific to their students' needs including French Immersion, Industrial Arts for grades 7 and 8, and separate grades 7 and 8 Bands. Their large population allows them to field competitive and non-competitive athletic teams in multiple sports.

Swan Valley Regional Secondary School



School Motto: Make a difference today for tomorrow.

The Swan Valley Regional Secondary is a great source of pride for residents of the Swan Valley area. The school is located in Swan River and is the only Secondary School in the Valley. Their priorities include: Improving learning outcomes for all students; Strengthening pathways between and among secondary school, post-secondary education and work; Promoting the development of wellness and healthy school environments; Strengthening community relationships to support learning; Incorporating Indigenous perspectives throughout the curriculum; and Educating for sustainable development. Students are able to pursue programs of study leading to graduation from the Regular English Program, the Technology Program or the French Immersion Program.

The school was built in 1972 with the vision of the Board of Trustees to develop a future for our students and our community, where academic and technical vocational programs are blended into one setting and offered to our broader community. The SVRSS began the first Teen Parent Program in Manitoba in 1992, and it continues today. The program is offered to students with children with onsite nursery care and parenting supports. In addition to numerous athletic teams, the school also has the following clubs: Drama, Intramural sports, Youth Voice, Envirothon, Interscholastic Sports, TADD, Executive Challenge, Skills Manitoba, Yearbook, Youth in Philanthropy, and Student Council. SVRSS boasts an impressive number of vocational programs including: Automotive Technology; Business Education/Marketing; Carpentry; Culinary Arts; Electrical Trades Technology; Family Studies; Hairstyling; Health Care Aide; Heavy Duty Equipment Technician; Information Technology; Resources and Environmental Management; Visual Communication; and Welding. In 2014, a first class Heavy Duty Mechanics shop was completed, 2017 saw the completion of the Trades Building which is capable of hosting Carpentry, Plumbing, and Industrial Electrical Programming. Recent upgrades to the building include Science Lab Renovations and a complete exterior upgrade.

As the mandate of the Commission is to gain feedback on the six main areas of focus, the remainder of our submission will be structured in a manner that deals with each topic directly.

A Long-Term Vision:

What should the goals and purpose of K-12 education be in a rapidly changing world?

Merriam-Webster defines education as “the action or process of educating or of being educated” and “The knowledge and development resulting from the process of being educated.” The importance of this definition is that the word **process** is used in both. In discussions surrounding our K-12 Public Education System, this key word emphasizes the need to look at our system in terms of addressing the needs of society as whole, right down to the needs that individual families feel need to be addressed as well. This process needs to take into account a child’s development from the very earliest of years right to young adulthood when traditional ‘schooling’ has ended and the young adult is entering their next phase of life.

In the end, the process needs to produce contributing members of a democratic society. Students are prepared with the academic and cognitive skills required to move on to any type of post-secondary training, technical skills to be able to directly enter the workforce, as well as the soft skills required to ensure that these young citizens can navigate their environment, work well with others and achieve their own goals.

What are the strengths and weaknesses of the current system?

Strengths

In the Swan Valley School Division, we have many strengths. We have: one central high school that has been visionary in the areas of technical-vocational education; a community support system in place to help families in need; a K-12 French Immersion Program; provide full-time Kindergarten; the first fiber optic network in rural Manitoba which has allowed for greater internet and communication capabilities; a commitment to meeting not only the intellectual needs of our students but the emotional and physical needs through partnerships; partnerships with Post-Secondary, specifically to offer dual credit opportunities to our high school students; UCN is welcomed and encouraged to use our facilities to offer programming to adult students. Partnerships with local daycares, nursery schools, Headstart and the North-Parkland Parent-Child Coalition to offer opportunities for young learners preparing to enter school; collaborative relationships with all Municipal partners and the community at large are encouraged to provide the best education we can with the resources we have available.

The strengths of today’s system that allows for our Division to be visionary and a leader in many of the areas mentioned in the previous paragraph is quite simple: we have a locally elected School Board that takes into account local interests and needs. They are able to work with communities, families, administration and the Province to respond to needs that are identified in our rapidly changing world. A further example is the creation of the Environmental Sciences program. This highly subscribed program has been a stepping stone for so many to enter the rapidly expanding field of environmental sciences. This program spurred the creation of an extra-curricular Envirothon program which has seen international success and helped many students make career decisions. Our local industries are mainly agriculture and forestry. Our graduates leave our high school prepared for careers in these industries as

we offer not only the academic skills, but the technical skills like mechanics, welding, GIS knowledge, and simulated experiences operating heavy machinery. Local needs can be identified easily and responded to in a timely and appropriate manner. When return on investment is considered, our local decision to create and support the Environmental Sciences program has indeed provided exceptional return.

Weaknesses

Considering that education is a process, today's system has several weaknesses including: education is compulsory from ages seven to eighteen, the most crucial years are the early formative stages which by the age of seven have all ready passed. The optimal age for language learning occurs before and around age three. Invest in families from the pre-natal to school age stages to support readiness. **One recommendation would be to change legislation to make education compulsory starting at age 5.**¹ Earlier intervention will reap many rewards and make sure that all kids can begin Kindergarten equally prepared.

As finances have been and will always be an issue, we would encourage various Governmental Departments to work together harmoniously to maximize resources that each department has. We have two examples: the first is the removal of the local URIS nurse position to be covered by a regional nurse. At one point a nurse was travelling from Beausejour to visit a family located outside of Swan River. The nurse would drive approximately 550 km one-way, to arrive at the family's home and discover they were not there. Not knowing who to talk to or where to go to find them, the nurse turned around and drove back to Beausejour. We now have a URIS nurse that comes from Dauphin up to three times a year. In the past we had a .25 URIS nurse that was LOCAL, knew the families and the students and could create and support health care plans based on ever changing needs. The local nurse was able to monitor and respond appropriately in a timely manner. Here is a second example: Public Health is not able to give our School Division a list of pre-school children in the area to facilitate connecting with families and building relationships earlier than school entry. There should be no waiting lists for pre-school children to receive direct-therapy services. Future success in the school system is very much dependent on those early connections, take the barriers down to make it easier for School Divisions.

A recommendation in this area would be to share services between Public Health and School Divisions. Having Speech, Social Workers, Mental Health, etc. positions shared between the two entities would not only provide greater access to service but make recruiting and retention of qualified personnel much easier in rural Manitoba.²

Another easily identifiable weakness is the lack of consistent career development preparation throughout the Province. **Emphasis needs to be placed on career exploration, curriculums need to be relevant to today's world and career education needs to be mandated.**³ However, many divisions are ill-equipped to deal with this as vocational programming may be very limited or non-existent. According to the Manitoba Labour Market Forecast for the years of 2018 to 2024, 31% of job openings will be managerial or professional usually requiring a University education; 29% will be technical and skilled, usually requiring college or apprenticeship training; 30% will be considered intermediate, clerical or operator which will require secondary school and/or occupation specific training; 10% will be elemental

and labouring, skills required can be learned with on the job training. With only 31% requiring a university education, our attention needs to be turned to the vast majority of jobs that will require technical skills training. School Divisions, such as Swan Valley that have a wide variety of vocational programming are positioned well to fill these needs. These Divisions' facilities and programs need to be used to their fullest extent. **We feel that in order to maximize resources, the Department should consider the potential of SVSD being a vocational training center for a large area.**⁴ The addition of a student residence, changing the school year to allow students to attend classes in Swan River while still having plenty of time to be at home with their families (balanced school year with a four-day school week?), and the encouragement of the Department of Education and Training for students to explore technical and vocational programs, would help numerous students with career exploration and vocational training, as well as save the Department funds by using facilities and resources that all ready exist.

The non-existence of consistent data collection methods throughout the Province is also a weakness. There needs to be a singular method of data collection which starts as soon as a child enters school and follows them through to post-secondary. We currently use PowerSchool for Attendance and Student Reporting. Clever, which is compatible with PowerSchool, is used for recording IEPs, literacy data, and an accommodation checklist. **It would be ideal if there was one universal system that would be able to show all student data and could easily transfer if students move schools or elsewhere in the Province.**⁵ We should be able to have all data at our fingertips so a teacher knows exactly where students are at in their performance, attendance, reports, etc. This would be similar to the medical profession where doctors are able to see former client records, prescriptions and treatment plans.

Funding needs to accurately reflect geographical location. For instance, our Division spends a larger portion of its budget on transportation than many. Ninety percent of our students require our transportation services daily to get to and from school, and due to our geography, our transportation costs to provide our students with opportunities in sports, academic and skills competitions, as well as professional development opportunities for staff, are very high and make many experiences which we would love to give our students impossible. Even though we are really a short distance from the northern community status cut off which is the 53rd parallel, we are not recognized as a northern community so do not receive any extra funding to accommodate these unavoidable costs.

A program that would be of great benefit to all students living in rural Manitoba, would be "urban living skills".⁶ For many of our youth, the only experience they have in an urban area is gained while given the opportunity to visit Winnipeg on a school trip. It is very intimidating for a young citizen to leave their rural upbringing and move to a larger center. A program that would last a week or longer that would take groups of youth to a city, to teach them how to use public transportation, find an apartment, use a public library, find a doctor, how to pay bills, and how to navigate various schools could be a life-changing opportunity to ease the fear of leaving their rural home to possibly attain a post-secondary education. Many First Nations schools have begun programs similar to this and have been seeing great success.

Another factor which must be considered is our lack of commercial air service. This was, in fact, pointed out as a huge barrier by the Manitoba Chamber of Commerce President Chuck Davidson during a recent visit to the Swan Valley. Professionals cannot easily access our community and must make the five-and-

a-half-hour drive (one-way). We cannot bring in Professional Development facilitators and contract service professionals because the added expense of paying for extra days for travel time as well as finding somebody willing to drive is very difficult. To access most Professional Development, we need to send teams usually into Winnipeg. These trips require hotel, meals, mileage along with registration fees to be paid for many people. Besides the obvious monetary contributions, the total time it takes to travel must be considered when staff are taking time from their jobs and their families to travel. We incur extra costs by having to pay for substitute staff to cover for travel time. And as anybody in rural Manitoba knows, travel in the winter can often be dangerous. We are often having staff travel in inclement weather, which they do knowing that the sessions they are attending will be of benefit to their students. Unfortunately, we have only so many dollars that we can spend on Professional Development. Our funds do not allow for staff to attend many sessions in Winnipeg at all. Teachers have their own Professional Development Committee and decide how to best use their allocated funds.

Student Learning:

What are the conditions required to achieve excellence in student achievement and outcomes in Manitoba?

Define excellence! Every student that enters our schools is different, and so is their definition of excellence.

It is a simple fact that students cannot learn if they come to school without their five basic needs being met. These include: physiological needs such as food, shelter, sleep and clothing; safety, such as personal security, health and resources; love and belonging; self-esteem, respect and freedom; and the need of a desire to become the most that one can be. The fulfilment of these needs has a direct impact on a student's success in the classroom. It must first be discussed how the basic needs of ALL children are met before anything else.

Test Scores

The most recent PISA and PCAP results have shown that eight out of ten students are achieving at or above expected levels. This is a very important statistic as this shows that we do not have a broken education system, but a broken social system. Two factors have great influence on why these children do not achieve at higher levels: poverty and newcomer status (language barriers).

If the Government is truly serious about raising test scores, worry about the bottom two.⁷ This discussion may be beyond the scope of this review because it requires serious discussion between Government Departments, and much public consultation to create a Province-wide anti-poverty plan. We need to strive to ensure that all students can enter the school system close to the same level of readiness, and that families have the support systems required to ensure their needs are fulfilled for their best chance of success. Just as important as the discussion would be, a true commitment by all levels of Government to address the issue is necessary. Perhaps it would be wise to investigate the Federal Program called Jordan's Principle. Jordan's Principle makes sure all First Nations children can

access the products, services and supports they need, when they need them. It can help with a wide range of health, social and educational needs, and is seeing great success.

Student learning can only begin when connections are made with families and children in the early years. As Dr. Fraser Mustard says, “intervene early, and intervene often.” Cycles need to be broken. We can only begin to tackle the poverty issue by starting to break the cycle. Families that are struggling most likely came from families that struggled as well, we need to work harder at breaking that cycle. **All students in Grade 9 should be required to take a course on family studies.**⁸ Begin by teaching our youth positive parenting skills before they have children of their own. Students could learn about parenting and child development using the Triple P (Positive Parenting Program) as a foundation.

Mental Health

Mental health education must also be made a priority.⁹ It is as vital for students to be able to express thoughts and emotions effectively as it is for adults to understand and respond. We have only begun to address the mental health crisis that affects so many. Mandatory instruction on this issue should happen, integrated through curriculum starting as early as Kindergarten.

In increasing numbers, our Division is finding that when clinical services are offered, particularly in psychiatric cases, many families do not feel the need to follow a Doctor’s recommendations. Children may receive a diagnosis, but instead of following a treatment plan which quite often includes medication and behaviour plans, children are returned to the classroom without the recommended treatments. When families do not support treatment plans, it makes it very difficult for teachers and the school system to help these children achieve to their full potential. Extra human resources are needed to engage families to take part in the process. A family liaison worker would be greatly beneficial to engage the family and create a workable plan between the school and family.

Who is ultimately responsible?

Ultimately, the Provincial Government is responsible. It is the responsibility of not only the Department of Education and Training, but every Department as student’s success is dependent on Departments which provide direct services, but also have a direct impact on our Provincial Economy. The Department of Education is responsible for setting the desired outcomes and the many subjects our students are taught. But you are not alone as we all have a part to play. Alongside the Provincial Government, should be locally elected school boards. It is the responsibility of the locally elected school board to make sure schools are following Provincial regulations, and are best suited to deal with issues at the local level when they arise.

School administrators are responsible for making their school community thrive and teachers should be teaching the curriculum. Parents and guardians are responsible for supporting their students and their schools. Students are responsible for giving their best, whatever that may be, every single day.

Again, in the area of accountability, as mentioned before, a consistent method of student tracking and data collection is imperative. Success in post-secondary, and other post-secondary training efforts speak directly to the success of the K-12 system in providing necessary skills for training, education, and instilling the necessary attitude for a lifelong learning focus. **We urge the Department of Education and Training to highly consider tracking students for a period of three or four years after graduation.**

Tracking should also extend into the workplace to measure career success, and community involvement as a measure of citizenship growth.¹⁰

It is time we also hold students accountable as well. Society seems to have put the brakes on expecting kids to excel, and we are too afraid to let kids fail. Failure can teach one to succeed, schools give students all the tools they can to help students succeed, but one of these tools that must be given is that in life you simply fail sometimes, and they need to be taught to recover and succeed in their next attempt. They need to be taught we don't lose, we learn.

If one of the goals of education is to prepare our children to be contributing members of society, an important lesson that needs to be learned very early in life is that hard work pays off. Students need to be accountable for the completion of course work with acceptable levels of outcomes met, at all levels.

We feel a mandatory high school credit should be earned in the area of volunteer and community service work; many students simply are not given the opportunity to learn the value of being a volunteer due to numerous circumstances.¹¹ Preferably, the credit would be earned outside the school day, however in extenuating circumstances allowances will need to be made for students to volunteer during school hours. Volunteering is a learned behaviour and is a wonderful way to help teach citizenship.

When citizenship is mentioned, we must also consider today's new reality in the digital world. **Digital citizenship education must be provided by Divisions and integrated across all curriculum.¹²** The online world is only going to become more integrated into our daily lives. We must not try to control students' usage of devices and technology; we must teach them how to use it effectively. A part of this is teaching children basic computing skills. **Students leaving grade twelve need to be able to compose and communicate effectively, using the medium of the day.¹³**

Another way to help teach citizenship, as well as the soft skills that are needed to be successful in today's world, is through high school extra-curricular programs. Unfortunately, because of the costs associated with these programs, schools cannot bare the entire cost alone and must pass along these costs to their students through user-fees. These costs are often too much for families and so, many students miss out on the experience. In reality, extra-curricular programming is more important than academics in helping students develop these skills. The biggest reason for high costs of extra-curricular programming? To challenge students and grow skills we need to travel to other communities and so, our biggest hurdle is our geography and the costs associated with travel.

Teaching:

How can we help teachers and school leaders become most effective?

Students and teacher can be most effective if they have students entering their schools and classrooms with their basic needs met and are ready to learn. Unfortunately, the school system is having to deal with increasing numbers of socio-economic issues that make effective teaching very difficult.

High quality professional development is necessary. Many rural school divisions rely heavily on the Manitoba Rural Learning Consortium's professional development opportunities. Their services are cost effective and very high quality, which is resulting in an increasing number of requests that the group is starting to have difficulty fulfilling them all. **Funding for mRLC from the Province should be increased**

as they would like to provide services to Northern Divisions but do not have the capacity to do so.¹⁴

Finally, their methods should be used as a sustainable model for not only professional development, but educational research as well. As mentioned earlier, sending staff to Winnipeg for PD is extremely expensive, which makes the offerings of the mRLC even more desirable as services are delivered in your own school, or in a nearby school. They are effective and convenient.

Different Divisions, and different schools, have different needs. These differences need to be identified and in turn resources need to be provided to ensure these needs are filled. This requires a solid working relationship between families/teachers/school administrators/management/School Boards/Department of Education and Training. All need to be able to communicate freely in an effort to recognize need and ensure appropriate resources are provided.

Another area that needs to be acknowledged is that the staff of a school needs to reflect their community. For example, the Swan Valley School Division's student body consists of over 40% First Nations and Indigenous Students. We cannot provide our students with a staff that reflects this demographic as there is a lack of availability of personnel as well as a lack of resources to hire extra Elders/Language teachers/advisors. Our IAA staff are stretched far too thin to have a strong enough impact in this area. We have begun an Indigenous/First Nations Professional Learning Community which consists of representatives from every school that meet on a regular basis to keep working towards implementing recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Report, but we cannot move fast enough to have an impact on our present students. We have also trained all of our staff in Treaty Education through the Treaty Commission of Manitoba.

One area of our system that provides much support to teachers and students is the position of Education Assistants. These positions are quite valuable and provide great assistance. In some areas of the Province, including SVSD, there is one very large issue though, Educational Assistants are tasked to work with the students with the greatest of needs. These people play vital roles in the success of these students, and are the least educated. School Division's are trying their best to give EAs the tools they need to be successful, but formal EA training is not available in most rural communities, including ours. **The Department needs to look at this part of the system, and look at creating an accessible program for Divisions to use to train Educational Assistant personnel to work with the students with the greatest of needs.¹⁵** It is most definitely a necessary member of an educational team, but is it as effective as we need it to be?

We would ask that as part of this Education Review, teacher training at Universities be examined as well. It seems student teaching has the least status in the Faculty of Education, but yet it is the most important part. The most important part of a teacher candidate's education is the long-term student teaching position. Sixteen week (or longer) placements are crucial as these young teachers can experience a large portion of a school year, make connections with students and leave with a greater sense of what it takes to be an effective classroom teacher. Universities also need to be encouraging their student teachers to experience different regions of the Province. For example, a student that has grown up in a rural area should be encouraged to do a student teaching placement in an urban area and vice-versa. Of course there can be exceptions made for students who have families, or extenuating circumstances. Widening a young teacher's point of reference in regards to diversity is only a positive in their education. Once a teacher begins working, it is crucial to have a mentorship program to help the new teacher navigate their first couple of years in the profession.

Accountability for student learning:

How can the education system develop a stronger sense of shared accountability for student learning?

Employee groups, management, school boards, and the Provincial Government need to be able to have constructive methods of communication to build a relationship based on mutual understanding and respect. All play an important part in the success of our students, and students learning will only improve when all parties are seen as important parts of an educational team focusing on the needs of children. Government needs to treat all groups as true partners. Other partners require and help fund governance training for Trustees which only strengthens the system. Currently there is a province that has begun an education improvement plan which has their school board association co-chairing specific parts of the process. This method will ultimately succeed because the process is not owned solely by the Government, other groups have ownership in the process.

Is the current system providing equitable learning outcomes for all students?

As mentioned earlier, our Province is diverse. School Divisions have different needs that need addressed and many are not equipped to provide equitable learning opportunities. Equitable learning outcomes are directly correlated to opportunity. The professional resources, technology and vocational facilities needed vary greatly across the province that is not possible to provide equitable learning outcomes. In other words, we do not currently have the resources to support no child left behind.

Equitable learning outcomes can only be possible with equitable opportunity, and so the challenge is to provide equitable opportunity. To develop true equity one would have to consider everything from school uniforms, free extra-curricular athletics, vocational opportunities in every area of the province, equal access to clinical services, to transportation and ease of access to clinical services. Could the change of structure from the traditional school year to a balanced year, a four-day school week or a combination of the two help with that? Perhaps that is an avenue that needs to be explored. It would require a major culture change in the Province, but there is definite merit in exploring this avenue.

As part of equal opportunity, we must recognize that there are great gaps in connectivity within our Province. The Province must make it a priority to ensure that cell service and high-speed internet is available, at a reasonable cost, to ALL areas of the province.¹⁶

Perhaps this may be one of the biggest problems with our education system today. For the most part (aside from students on modified programs), we do have equitable learning outcomes, but perhaps the system should be mandating outcomes that will prepare our graduates for real life instead of mandating present core subjects which must be successfully completed to graduate high school.

Governance:

What type of governance structures are needed to create a coordinated and relevant education system?

A governance structure that can provide the flexibility to meet the diverse needs of students across our Province. Local governance provides our communities that flexibility. It also provides our communities easy access to provide feedback and express concerns, create partnerships, and frequent consultation opportunities for communities to feel a part of their education system. Our communities want to be

involved in their education system as they have a vested interest in ensuring their children get the best possible education as they know education prepares our young people to be future contributing members of their community and society as a whole. Best governance is one that knows its public, knows what is going to work, and what is not, instead of trying to make everyone equal under the same model. The Swan Valley School Division has a proven record of being able to respond to community and Provincial needs from the days of small, one room country schools being closed to create schools in larger towns with an accompanying transportation system, to the construction of the impressive Swan Valley Secondary School, to the introduction of full-time Kindergarten to the most recent Heavy Duty and Trades Buildings being built by the High School to create a campus-like atmosphere for our students.

Should there be any changes to how school divisions, school boards and the Department of Education and Training are organized? If so, what changes are needed?

We feel very strongly that democratically elected school boards are an important part of our education system.¹⁷ We are unsure what is the right number of school boards, but do know that many communities fear losing their local school board. Decisions hopefully will not be made looking for cost savings as history has shown this is not the case. What makes sense in one area of Manitoba is not necessarily a good fit for another area, for example determining that all school divisions should have at least ten thousand students would look very different in various parts of the Province. Geography is an important factor. Ease of accessibility to various regions must also be considered in regards to geography. For example, it is a five-and-a-half-hour drive from Winnipeg to Swan River and we have no air service. It is very difficult to access the Swan Valley efficiently. Travel is difficult and there is always a huge loss in productivity due to travel time.

How do we better encourage and facilitate local input and engagement in the education system?

Communities need to be involved when big decisions are made. When tough decisions were needed to be made in our school division we went to each community for input and came to those meetings with ideas, not decisions. Since those meetings many community members have commented on how well informed they feel, why the tough decisions were necessary, and they truly felt a part of a team in making those decisions. We include parents and students, community members and staff on strategic planning. We also include staff, parents and students by gathering information on what they feel are important qualities when hiring key leadership positions like Principal or Superintendent.

Should there be any changes to who does what and how decisions are made? If so, what changes?

A school system can be most effective when all stakeholders have ownership.¹⁸ The Government, School Boards, administration, teachers, support staff, families, and students should be continuously working together, seeing each other as valuable members of our educational system. Consultation, as you are aware, is a great deal of work. If done well however, the benefits speak for themselves. We hope that an outcome of this review is that more public consultation becomes the norm, before any major decisions are ever made. **Effective governance can only be possible when the governing body knows its public.**¹⁹

Funding:

What actions are required to ensure that the education system is sustainable and provides equitable learning opportunities for all children and youth?

Existing vocational programming needs to be protected. With recent and upcoming budget cuts many vocational programs have either been eliminated or are the verge of being eliminated. If these programs are all ready in existence (SVSD has not made cuts to technical-vocational programming, yet) the Department needs to consider geography and distance to other centers, and community need funding before funding restrictions are considered.

Partnerships with Post-Secondary are crucial in maintaining viability in many rural areas where enrolment is declining. The Swan Valley School Division values our partnership with University College of the North. It is because of this partnership that we recently built out Trades Building which has the capacity to house Carpentry, Industrial Electrical and Plumbing Programs as well.

Partnerships with other Government Departments can also provide sustainability. For example, the Health Department could partner with School Divisions to provide access to greater occupational therapy, speech language pathology, individual counselling, family counselling, mental health, psychology or psychiatric services that schools cannot provide by themselves.

Full-time positions could be equally funded by School Divisions with the Health District. Not only would access to services improve, but ensure that a full-time position would be maintained would also help in the recruitment and retention of trained professionals. Access for young children to speech, OT, PT, and audiology services in rural areas such as ours is very difficult. Quite often access to services is the greatest barrier for families in need. There is always a waiting list for services and no direct intervention is provided. When a family finally does meet with the clinician, the family receives a list of exercises to practice with their child at home. If the parent does not have the ability to regularly and effectively work with the child, little to no progress is made. Access to these clinicians is limited to four times a year, and parents have the right to refuse the services all together.

There is not enough availability of clinicians to monitor and assist families as they need. And perhaps the option of refusal needs to be examined as well, parents may be ill-informed to make that decision or may be refusing services based on false information and pre-conceived notions. A process should be in place to determine exactly why the family is refusing the service, and it should not be easy to refuse the service. School Divisions having access to more clinicians to provide early interventions will not only help erode barriers to learning, but increase the chances of positive relationships being built between the family and school division.

There is no screening through public health for ADHD or language issues. Many parents do not take their children to a doctor, a dentist, a paediatrician, or for hearing tests. There is no screening of these children done until they reach school age, and because the compulsory age to enter school is 7, there are too many children entering the system with needs that have been left unaddressed for far too long.

To ease the burden of increasing numbers of students entering the system without having thorough screenings done, Public Health should be used as a means to ensure all three-year old learners have been screened, and if needed, referred to the appropriate clinician for assistance using direct one-on-one interventions.²⁰

We must also recognize that there may be situations where services may be offered but due to circumstance, families may not be able to access the available services. Sometimes the greatest service that be provided is to go to the family, or at least make sure transportation is not a barrier for those who need help the most. There is no doubt that dollars spent on early intervention pay off in the future. Having the monetary resources available to provide these services is one issue, however in rural Manitoba the lack of qualified professionals available proves to be an obstacle as well.

A positive step that has been taken in SVSD, in partnership with Community groups and assistance from the Provincial Government, is the creation of daycare programs in every school in our Division. With the problem of declining populations and student enrollment in rural Manitoba and their associated Divisions, daycares in schools not only helps create an earlier bond between family and school, but saves money by using space that is readily available in many rural school. A final benefit is that families can support the communities that they live in which boosts their local economy. Jobs are kept local and money is spent locally. **SVSD strongly encourages the Provincial Government to motivate community groups and School Divisions to form partnerships to create daycares in schools.**²¹ The benefits are endless.

Communities need to make use of the resources they have available. Throughout the Province there is one resource that is found in every corner but is not used nearly enough. That is resource is our precious senior citizens. **We feel the Province should be encouraging seniors by offering tax incentives, to volunteer to act as 'grandparents' in schools.**²² There is no way to measure the value of having seniors volunteer their time with our youth. In our Division many schools have created Community Gardens, with local seniors volunteering to help teach students to plant, care for and harvest their own produce. Not only are kids learning about providing for themselves, but the connections they are making with these seniors is precious, for both student and volunteer.

Is the education system currently properly funded and sustainable?

Our current system is not properly funded. There simply is not enough consideration given to geography and distance. Both impact our budget greatly as we are not in a region where we have easy and affordable access to services. Rural divisions simply cannot provide services or opportunities that urban Divisions can provide simply because of cost. The desire is there, but the funding is not.

One area of our system that is underfunded is in the area of Indigenous and First Nations students. Because so many families choose to not self-identify, Federal funding cannot be accessed and therefore the programming that these students deserve is presently inadequate.

Unfortunately, the word rural is used in very general terms as a catch all, when in fact Rural Manitoba is quite diverse with region specific cost variances, especially if you are not connected to a major commerce transportation system be it highway, rail or air. As a rule of thumb our major PSFB repair projects, upgrades such as SVRSS Science Labs and new builds are substantially higher due to our geographic location. Contractors usually cite freight, inability to tie the job with another as we are deemed too far from either Dauphin or Russell and distance as a crew normally will want to stay the night then drive home or leave before noon.

Fortunately, due to local decision making, when resources need to be prioritized, the flexibility is there to make decisions that best fit their area. It is always the goal of our local school board to maximize

resources and are constantly looking for areas to be more efficient and still provide a high quality of education.

Conclusion:

When families are asked what they want from their school for their children, the answer is almost always framed in terms of how they were prepared for life after school. Families do not comment on reading and writing scores, they comment on how their children are being prepared for work and life.

It may have been noticed that there has been almost no mention of test scores in this submission. That is for one reason, standardized test scores cannot possibly define the success of a student in the real world. It is also impossible for any standardized test to adequately reflect the diversity of our students or their needs. A high math score does not determine one's worth, and vice versa. Standardized tests do play one important role in our system. Accountability will never be found by showing improvement in test scores, but what these scores can, and do show, is that improvement is always needed. A consistent and concerted effort to raise the socioeconomic standing and abilities of those who are less fortunate will have the most impact on test scores.

Our society is changing very rapidly, and in the Swan Valley School Division, we believe that we are educating our students to enter a workforce where most jobs that will be available, do not even exist yet. Our education system needs to be responsive to our changing world in a timely manner. Our youth need to exit the system prepared with academic, cognitive, technical and soft skills required to be successful in post-secondary, the workforce and everyday life.

Cradle to career is a great mantra for public education. As much as focus is put on career, we must put greater focus on the early years. Investment in early education is critical and the issue of poverty must be addressed to give all students the best chance at success. We urge Government to make poverty reduction a priority.

Education needs to be a process that helps students and their families gain the necessary skills to find success in life. The process begins in the pre-natal stages with proper care of the mother and unborn child. The process should never end. If we as a school system are able to fulfill the goal of graduating youth that become happy, productive citizens, then the cycle should repeat with the next generation and the process continues.

What should education in Manitoba look like? It should look like education in the Swan Valley School Division, where our Vision is: ***Ready to Succeed.***

Summary of Recommendations

1. Change legislation to make education compulsory from age five. Page 16
2. Share services between Public Health and School Divisions. Page 16
3. Place emphasis on career exploration, curriculum needs to be relevant to today's world and career education needs to be mandated. Page 16
4. Consider the possibility of SVSD to become a vocational training center for a large area. Page 17
5. Create one universal student data management system for students in Manitoba. Page 17
6. For rural students, create and fund an 'urban living skills program'. Page 17
7. If Government is truly serious about raising test scores, worry about the lowest scoring demographics. Poverty reduction strategies must be created and implemented. Page 18
8. Students in grade 9 should be required to take a course on family studies including parenting skills. Page 19
9. Mental health education must be a priority. Page 19
10. Track graduating students for a period of three or four years, into post-secondary and the work force. Page 19-20
11. A mandatory high school credit should be earned in the area of volunteer and community service work. Page 20
12. Digital citizenship must be provided by Divisions and integrated across all curriculum. Page 20
13. Students leaving grade twelve must be able to compose and communicate effectively, including word processing skills and using the medium of the day. Page 20
14. Funding for mRLC must be increased to allow the organization to provide services to ALL of rural Manitoba. Page 20-21
15. EA training must be accessible for all areas of the Province. Page 21
16. The Province must make connectivity via cell service and high-speed internet a priority. Page 22
17. Maintain democratically elected school boards. Page 23
18. Collaboration is critical as a school system can be most effective when all stakeholders have ownership. Page 23
19. Effective governance can only be possible when the governing body knows its public. Keep decision making local. Page 24
20. Public Health must be utilized to ensure all three-year old learners have been properly screened and if needed, referred to the appropriate clinician for assistance using direct one-on-one interventions. Page 25
21. Community groups and School Divisions must be encouraged to form partnerships to create daycares in schools. Page 25
22. The Province should be encouraging seniors to volunteer to act as 'grandparents' in schools. Page 25

Contact Information

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APPENDIX 1

Pictures of facilities and programming available at SVRSS.



SVSD Trades Building

- welcomed first carpentry students in 2017.

- capable of housing carpentry, plumbing, and industrial electrical programming.

- UCN is currently offering adult programming in this facility.

SVSD Heavy Duty Mechanics Shop

- welcomed first students in 2014.

- state of the art CNC machine.

- industrial overhead crane.

- facility is also used by UCN and Northern Sector Trade Council.



Outdoor Education
Envirothon student



Students can
earn their earn
Microsoft Office
Certification



Hairstyling Program



Heavy Duty Mechanics Program

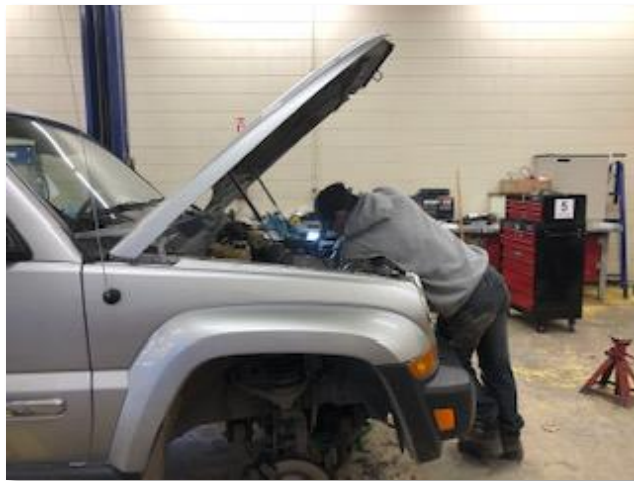


Virtual Reality in Visual
Communications

Warm-up shelter being
built for a local
snowmobile association
by carpentry students.



Carpentry, residential
electrical, and power
mechanics programming.



Student using one of two 3-D printers in information technology program.



Precision
Land
Management



Culinary Arts



Student using one of two heavy equipment simulators.





Students skills being tested at the MB High School Case Competition in Brandon and the Envirothon Regional Competition in Winnipeg.



SVRSS Senior Band performing in front of Niagara Falls. The group performed extensively through Toronto and the Niagara Falls area. Major trips are scheduled every two years.



Geography class trip to Drumheller and the Rocky Mountains, a tradition going back decades. Trip is held every two years.

Appendix 2

29 letters of support for have been included in this submission. Many of these letters discuss the challenges we face in our area due to geography. We have letters from municipalities, businesses, private citizens, community groups and parent councils. All oppose large-scale amalgamation and support maintaining locally elected school boards.

Appendix 3

Petitions were placed in various locations around the Swan River Valley. 1056 signatures supported the following:

“The K-12 Education Review is underway. The Swan Valley School Division is creating a report to submit to the Commission and we are asking our communities for support. Two matters which may be under consideration in this review are **the large-scale amalgamation and a possible move towards appointed school boards**. Together, these two changes could silence the community’s voice in education completely. Together, they would take away community ownership of local schools. If you value local voices for local choices through a locally elected School Board, **please sign below and have your voice heard.**”

It is our hope that the Commission sees by such a sizable volume of support, that maintaining locally elected school boards and the boundaries which form the Swan Valley School Division must be an outcome of this review.